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THE RELATION OF HOME CONDITIONS TO INDUSTRIAL EFFICIENCY

BY MARY BARNETT GILSON,

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For some time various agencies which aim toward the betterment of society have realized that no lasting results can be secured without the coöperation of the home. The school, the church, the hospital, organized charity, and in fact all organizations which assume it is their responsibility to help those with whom they come in contact are faced by many problems which cannot be solved without a knowledge of home conditions. Of late years industry, too, in looking more deeply into the causes of ill health and dissatisfaction among workers has discovered that the removal of these causes cannot take place within the four walls of the factory alone. Many firms today avowedly profess to do all in their power to maintain the health of their employes and to further their training and education. The greater advance an organization makes in this direction, the more intelligently it solves its problems connected with the human element, by so much does it recognize the close relationship of the home to the job.

The fact that there are armies of young workers entering the industrial field complicates the question. To say that young men and women do not need friendly aid and advice as to their personal problems is to confess ignorance. And it is obvious that many of these personal problems are vitally connected with home conditions. When the home and the school turn out young people trained in responsibility and with character and habits which fortify them for life and its difficulties and when the state does more than it now does toward training in citizenship and toward offering healthy recreation to its family, perhaps this burden will not fall so heavily upon industry. But at the present stage of sociological development industry must coöperate with all other agencies and, most of all, with the home, in training and educating and developing its young workers if it wishes to maintain health and prosperity among them.

The physical conditions of a factory may be up to the highest standard of the times; sanitation and ventilation may be as nearly perfect as possible; rest rooms, lunch rooms, recreational facilities, shower baths and other comforts and luxuries may be provided by an employer whose aim is to make the working conditions of his people as pleasant as possible. Hours may be reasonably short, wages may be high, a system removing friction and worry in connection with the work itself may have been installed. And yet, the employer who is intelligently attempting to reduce his labor turnover and to improve the personnel of his organization knows that these things alone, while essential, will not suffice. He recognizes that the health and well-being of his people are fully as dependent upon the conditions which confront them outside of the factory as upon those existing within. He recognizes, too, that these conditions outside of their work constitute fully as important factors in their steadiness and efficiency as any working conditions he may provide.

As for the "right" of the factory management to interest itself in the lives of workers outside of the factory, it is not only a "right" when it affects the worker in his work, but it is a duty which is a natural outgrowth of executive responsibility. The progressive manager knows full well the value of hygienic factory conditions for his workers but of what avail is it to provide healthful working conditions from seven in the morning until five in the evening if these same workers are to live in unhealthful surroundings and under improper influences from five at night until seven in the morning? Interest in the hygiene of the worker cannot be truly effective, therefore, unless it attaches itself to the worker at all times. It is all very well to use such trite expressions as "paternalism" and "benevolent despotism" and other hackneyed phrases in connection with this subject, but actual experience confirms us in our belief that people are not "grown-ups" merely because they are termed so. Unfortunately most people are as ignorant of the laws of health as babes in arms. It is all very ideal to say that we should manage our own lives. No one denies that this is an ultimate goal toward which every intelligent agency for the betterment of mankind should be constantly aiming, but in the meantime it is hardly practical to expect a perfect democracy to spring into being full fledged. In other words, before we can manage our own affairs

we must be taught how. For example, when we consider the numbers of foreign people who are working in our American industrial establishments it is absurd to talk about thrusting them into wholly new surroundings and difficulties without any friendly advice and instruction from those who have a thorough acquaintanceship with these surroundings. The modern tendency is to try to avoid the mistakes of others. It is unscientific to proceed by "the rule of thumb"; in other words, science and knowledge are to proceed from where the other fellow left off in order to eliminate the constant waste and duplication of past achievement. Now, cannot this be carried into the field of modern hygiene? Would it not be inexcusable to "let people work out their own salvation" if by so doing their health and the health of the race is affected? Moreover, if an employer wishes to know why a worker has constant headaches and is therefore unfitted for his work and if he has done everything that can be done inside the factory to discover the cause, who can question his right to go into the home of the worker in the effort to learn facts which will make it possible for him to eradicate the headaches and to retain the worker? People who shrug their shoulders and say this is "impertinent interference" would prefer, possibly, to let the headaches go on until the worker became so inefficient that discharge would inevitably follow. The intelligent employer, however, does not follow this *laissez faire* policy. He knows that by reducing the causes of inefficiency he is helping to make better workers and better citizens and a more stable and steadily prosperous body of employes and he considers it his duty to use every honest means to attain such a desirable end.

We hear a great deal today about "occupational diseases," about employers being responsible for the lack of security and continuity of employment, about the unfitting of women for motherhood because of industry's demands and about the lack of opportunity to rise in the industrial world. These charges, however, cannot be laid at the door of industry itself but of industrial administration. Industry, badly regulated, gives justification to such charges, but industry properly regulated will produce quite opposite results. In any case, intelligent employers welcome the opportunity to join with statisticians and investigators in an effort to seek

the truth and if the truth cannot be found within the factory walls it is their duty to get it outside.

Society justly holds industry responsible for certain results; employers, therefore, must not only be permitted but must be encouraged to use their fullest intelligence in attaining these results. Furthermore, it is society's duty to support them in their efforts instead of indulging in the ill-founded, destructive criticism which has become the fashion, especially among inexperienced theorists and academicians.

The fundamental factors of home influence are physical, mental and moral. It is obvious that as far as the physical conditions of the home are concerned they have a vital connection with the health of the worker. A man who sleeps with his windows closed, and who lives in unsanitary surroundings will naturally suffer in due course of time. We have found, when making home visits, people sleeping in small bedrooms with the windows tightly closed and gas stoves burning. Sometimes bedrooms are badly overcrowded in order to keep intact the "parlor" and dining room. The case of two girls who were suffering from constant headaches may be instanced, who when visited at home were found to be living in the attic of a new frame house. Their father, mother, three boys and two girls were crowded in this small attic with no privacy whatever, and with the windows tightly corked and a large gas stove without a flue. The father had recently bought the house and was renting to some families the first and second floors as well as a small house in the rear where he had formerly lived. He had stopped working and was having a beautiful time on his rent money and the pay envelopes of his two daughters. He was finally persuaded to move his family downstairs and the effect on their health and attitude of mind was almost immediate. Numerous cases could be cited of people who are anemic and pale during the winter months and who immediately begin to take on color and show more vigor when summer comes. It is hard to convince such people that winter air in their bedrooms is not deadly. Many foreigners do not realize that what kept them alive in the old country was probably the fact that they were engaged in field work through the day and that a close bedroom did not therefore work havoc as it does to indoor workers. In cases where employes complain that they are not feeling well and the work does not agree with them, it is generally

found that living conditions are in reality responsible. When these have been remedied their attitude toward their work invariably changes.

In Cleveland most of the modern houses for working people are single or two-family houses with a fair amount of ground. The majority of the newer houses have bath rooms, the acquiring of which is as yet a matter of conscious pride. Bath rooms, in other words, are a matter of style and distinction in the neighborhood. You belong to a little higher stratum of society if you have such a luxury. What's the difference? We all know necessities grow out of luxuries and that "style" has played an important part in raising the standard of living. There is an encouraging tendency on the part of our workers to build their own homes, to have modern plumbing and to have enough ground for a vegetable garden and flowers. There is probably no large city in the country whose workers' homes show more pride in flowers and lawns than do those of Cleveland. The progressive employer realizes that the more comfortable the homes of his employes are the better and more desirable workers they make. It is only the most benighted and ignorant man who does not think it is "good business" to hire people who are aiming to provide themselves and their families with pleasant homes. Every encouragement should be offered to the worker who is living in unhealthy, disagreeable surroundings to get into a better environment as soon as possible. People who take pride in their homes are invariably more thrifty, ambitious and reliable and it has been our experience that wherever we have been able to induce a man to improve his housing conditions it has resulted in making him not only a steadier and more efficient worker, but also a more self-respecting member of the community.

But responsibility cannot end with an attempt to better the physical condition of the home. The moral and mental atmosphere have, also, an untold influence on the efficiency of the worker. Centuries of tradition, superstition and wrong thinking have left their imprint on all of us and in some homes science and reason and logic are eyed with suspicion and only reluctantly granted a lodging. It is difficult to persuade a woman to have her eyes examined by a competent oculist when her mother and grandmother have convinced her that ear rings will cure sore eyes. It is hard to root out of some foreign-born men the deeply imbedded idea that their

wives are beasts of burden. So many points of view come to light, so many warped ideas which have been passed on from generation to generation, and the need for tact and wise dealing and patience is infinite.

Through close contact with the homes of working people one is more and more awakened to the problems which confront women in industry. Constantly we must keep in mind that the girl workers of today are the wives and mothers of tomorrow. In an industrial establishment where the health of the people is of first importance a girl stands a far greater chance of proper physical development than she does in the average home where, as anyone acquainted with this problem well knows, the standards and ideas of health are almost mediaeval. As for the much debated question concerning the influence of industry on motherhood, we must keep in mind that motherhood means not only the physical function of producing offspring but it means as well the bringing up and training of children. A rightly conducted business, requiring high personal standards and affording training such as is not obtainable elsewhere, not only develops healthier and more competent people but also develops their character. And surely character is the *sine qua non* of such an exacting profession as that of motherhood. Let us not be sentimental in the consideration of "women in industry." I know many a girl today who will be far more careful in the choice of a husband because she has a good job and because she is facing actual conditions of life than if she did not have the opportunities which modern industry furnishes to women.

But, whether or not we welcome these broadening opportunities, we must not blind ourselves to the accompanying problems which present themselves. Beginning with the young girl, there is the growing independence, the impatience with parental restraint, the cheap amusements which are slowly but surely vitiating her taste and lowering her standards. The question of recreation alone is a far-reaching one, indeed. How can a girl develop into a good worker when her parents permit her to frequent cheap dance halls and movies any and every night of the week? Or, going to the other extreme, how can she work with any spirit and interest if her parents obdurately refuse to permit her to go any place and, though she may be brimming over with life and youth, she is practically a prisoner in her own house? We have had girls who have grown pale

and listless and have lost all interest in their work because their parents would not permit them to invite any of their friends to their homes nor would they let them out of their sight in the evenings. The intelligent manager realizes keenly the wisdom of interesting the families of his workers in this problem of sane and natural recreation. He knows that the dissipated person is not a good earner nor a satisfied, happy worker and that men and women who are interested in good books and good music and healthy, wholesome forms of amusement, are those who qualify for advancement and therefore belong in the ranks of the "desirable." And he also knows that preaching to people to be good will not keep them from spending their idle time unprofitably. There is probably nothing the state could do which would accrue more to the benefit of working people than to furnish profitable recreational facilities to them. It is insufficient to pass laws which shorten working hours without proper provision for safeguarding the additional hours of recreation which result. Enlightened management recognizes that these additional hours may be devoted to uses which destroy instead of build up. For this reason it realizes its responsibility not only to furnish wholesome recreation which develops both body and mind but sees here another reason for the coöperation of the home.

In connection with the question of women in industry, we must consider the woman with "two jobs." Women are generally called on to stay at home when there is any sickness in the family. The idea of paying a competent neighbor or calling on the Visiting Nurses' Association instead of staying away from work to take care of a sick relative is of slow growth. There is need of much education in the home on this very subject of irregularity of attendance. It is not enough to have a worker impressed with a sense of responsibility. The worker's family also must have the right attitude toward this question. Home visits frequently disclose the fact that women who work all day in the factory also cook and scrub and wash at home in the evenings. A case of this sort was revealed a couple of years ago when we were canvassing the shop to see who needed to join the classes in English for foreigners. Peter R., a Hungarian who had come to America ten years ago and had become fairly proficient in English, demurred when he was told that we wished his wife, who had come over years later, to go to school and learn English from 4:30 to 5:30 twice a week. Said Peter, "But

who'll get my supper on Tuesdays and Thursdays if she stays at the factory to learn English?" When we told him Barbara worked all day long in the factory and worked just as hard as he did and that it would not hurt him in the least to cook the supper two days in the week, his dignity was obviously injured. It was only after much argument that we convinced him cooking was not Barbara's sacred and divine duty since he had permitted her to take upon herself the responsibility of a factory job. He finally agreed to cook his own supper Tuesdays and Thursdays and today Barbara speaks English and Peter knows what it means to have two jobs. Whenever circumstances warrant, we refuse to keep in our employ married women. They are as a rule irregular in attendance and burdened with household duties and we often find their husbands are depending on them for support. This unwritten law, we have found, has materially lessened the early, precipitate marriages in our factory. Girls of eighteen used to say, "I want off next Friday to get married. I'll be back Monday," but now we often hear, "Well, I'm not going to marry him until I know him better," or "You bet I won't work after I'm married. A girl has enough to do to keep house."

The idea that it is wiser for a girl to have a bank account than to marry without a penny and buy everything on the installment plan is also gaining headway. This matter of the bank account is one of the most vital occasions for home visits. It is often found that a girl's earnings are low because she has no incentive to make money. In an astonishing number of cases a worker passes over an unopened pay envelope to her mother even when no financial necessity for this exists. When a mother is visited and urged to allow her daughter to deposit in our penny bank all over a given sum, or a certain percentage of her earnings each pay day, it is surprising how quickly the girl's earning power increases. Many parents consider a child merely a financial asset and it is hard to convince them that they are removing all incentive from him by requiring him to turn over his unopened pay envelope. In some cases parents say, "No, my son shall never pay board. That would make him too independent. He must give me his pay." Besides removing the incentive to earn, this attitude on the part of the parents encourages early and ill-considered marriage as the only means of securing financial independence.

But if home visiting discloses the necessity of urging parents to permit their children to save it also reveals the value of training in spending. Unfortunately, the question of foreign parentage brings its difficulties in this matter. A girl coaxes and whines and makes life miserable for her mother until she is permitted to buy a white willow plume. If the mother protests, she is told that she does not know how girls in America dress and she reluctantly yields to this argument. A mother complained to us recently that her daughter was so addicted to the fancy shoe craze that she had thirteen pairs of shoes in her wardrobe and wanted money out of her last pay to buy another pair. This mother had never allowed her daughter to have a stipulated sum of money for clothes and some time after we persuaded her to do this in order that the girl might have some experience in proportionate expenditure. She told us that "Jennie soon found she had to spend her money for some other things besides shoes." When it is possible to convince parents of the wisdom of letting their girls and boys learn how to spend the results speak for themselves.

Sometimes home visits are necessary for the sake of securing coöperation on the subject of simplicity of dress. It is no longer a debatable question that elaborate clothes and jewelry and powder and paint have a demoralizing effect on the character and ability of a working girl. One mother said, "My other daughter works down at K's and she says the girls look something swell when they go to work, velvet skirts, pearl earrings, just as dolled up as if they was going to a party. I think that's nice for them girls." Some parents, on the other hand, are very responsible and coöperative in encouraging neatness and cleanliness and simplicity of dress. Sometimes radical measures have to be taken to bring about higher standards of cleanliness. Occasionally a very clean girl will come from a very dirty home but generally when a girl is careless about her appearance the cause of the trouble can be located at home. In connection with this it may be mentioned that the influence of a sanitary, well kept, orderly factory on the home is immeasurable.

It is self-evident that the problems which come up in connection with home visits are of infinite variety. The influence of quack doctors, of the idea that patent medicines are panaceas, the ignorance of food and diet (about which a separate chapter could be written) and of the simple rules of hygiene, the curse of modern

funerals and their attendant expense, all these and more confront the home visitor. Sometimes old wives' remedies present ludicrous situations. A good example of this is illustrated by the following: the factory nurse visited a girl who had sore throat and found she had wrapped a red herring around it and had drunk some kerosene. A mother was informed that her daughter was in danger of injuring her eyes by doing fine embroidery for her trousseau until late every night. During the conversation the nurse said, "You know her eyes are not very strong. She wears glasses." "Oh," replied the mother, "She don't wear glasses for her eyes. She wears 'em for her stummick." If any service worker in a factory expects to find an intelligent conception of the human body and its needs in the average home and if she thinks she can bring about a revolutionary change in ideas by home visiting she will be disappointed. But the evolutionary change is evident to the close observer and the growing confidence and coöperation and willingness to listen to another viewpoint become more and more noticeable as time passes.

Sometimes very intimate problems present themselves for solution. A girl whose environment is hopelessly bad may have to be advised to leave home and live with decent people. Sometimes a father has to be summoned before a municipal court and warned or sentenced. Frequently men must be forced to go to work when they are lazily falling back on the women of the family. A drunken father occasionally must be taken in hand and a timid girl instructed in detail how to assume a healthy degree of self-assertion. A case in point is that of Rosie T. whose father celebrated the receipt of his pay envelope every Saturday evening by beating her mother. Rosie was naturally much worried over this and once in the intimacy of a chat in her home she said she was at a loss to know what to do. The idea of filing an objection with her father personally seemed to require too much courage. "Talk to him!" she said scornfully "You can't talk to *him*. He's too bull-headed." Her mother was advised to get the father's pay herself and Rosie was told to tell her father when he objected to interference with his customary amusement that "American men do not beat their wives" and, in short, boldly to face him and "stand up" to him. The following Monday morning Rosie came in to the service department with beaming face. "Oh!" she exclaimed,

It worked fine. My pap came home awful mad and sez "Who's got my pay envelope?" An' I sez, "We have"; an' he started to hit my mother and I sez, "Here's where you get off! No woman in America has to take a lickin' off no man." An' you ought to seen him how surprised he was to see us standin' up for ourselves.

After that Rosie said, "Somehow I don't know what it is to feel afraid any more. I can talk up for myself now and he knows if he don't behave we won't stand for it. I feel bold now!"

It is no less necessary to get the "home folks" to understand the shop methods and system of work than it is to attempt to bring about an intelligent viewpoint in relation to health and a higher standard of living. Slipshod methods in many establishments account for much of the lack of responsibility of workers toward their jobs. Men who have worked in places where frequent absences were taken for granted occasionally resent any strictness on the part of the organization which demands regular attendance, but a visit to the home and a frank discussion with the wife or mother of the necessity of "being steady on the job" will generally bring about an honest attempt to help Jack or Jim to be more prompt and regular. Moreover, patience and tact must be exercised in educating the home people to an understanding of modern progressive business methods and the reasons for them. A woman who is acquainted with the fact that an organization has just enough workers to turn out its work and that every division is responsible for feeding another division will be much more likely to pay a neighbor or relative to take care of her when she is sick than to ask her husband or daughter to stay at home. The following letter from a mother of one of our girls shows an understanding of "standards" and "averages" which could not have been obtained except through an intelligent interest of the home in the shop:

DEAR MADAM—

I thought I would drop you a few lines letting you know my girl comes home from work all disgusted she worries because she dont turn out her standard she allways says Ma it dont agree for two chums to work side by side and thats Anna and me I always tell her that she dont make as much as she used to and she sayes she could make more if she would try but that Anna and her talk too much She says lot of times she dont feel like talking but An asks her one question and then they keep it up When Anna is on the other machine for a half day Susie makes good when she comes back again they talk and then that brings down Susie's average. Susie didn't want to tell you about this but she always complains at home that she dont like to work aside of her chum they have to much

to talk about. I like Anna very well but she believes in talking to much Miss G dont you think I was right of letting you know of this.

Yours respectfully

MRS. R.

It is this kind of understanding and coöperation which home visiting aims among other things to secure and the degree to which they exist often determines the steadiness and reliability of the worker. Moreover, every intelligent manager knows how much attitude of mind has to do with an employe's success. A person who hears constant criticism of his place of work and meets with scornful disapprobation of shop discipline and system at home is not likely to be in a frame of mind which induces honest effort. The subtle influence of the home atmosphere cannot indeed be measured, but it may safely be argued that no other factor except, possibly, the work itself so deeply affects the efficiency of the worker.

The occasions for home visits are many and may be made innumerable. The families of new workers should be visited as soon as possible, primarily for the sake of friendly contact. Cases of sickness and discipline obviously need to be followed into the home. An investigator recently seemed surprised at the lack of resentment toward our "intrusion" into the homes of our people. She was invited to accompany a member of the service department one morning when fifteen visits were made (an automobile expedites home visiting for the department) and she was frankly astonished at the welcome which was given the visitor in every instance. Home visiting has become such a matter of fact among our employes that no one questions the honesty of motives prompting it. A number of years of experience have proved not only that the Clothcraft Shop employes do not consider it "impertinent" but that they welcome the interest which home visiting signifies. In fact, parents frequently come to us to ask our help in solving problems at home. There must be absolute frankness of approach and treatment, however, in every case, as nothing could more injure the work of a service department than insincerity.

The "handling of labor" which means reducing people to automata is one thing and that which means a deep understanding of the psychology of human nature and of the intricate and devious methods by which people are inspired to become better workers and better citizens is a vastly different thing. And anyone who

approaches the subject of this newer and more intelligent kind of handling or rather guiding of human beings will confess himself baffled without both a thorough understanding of home conditions and the coöperation of the home. Finally, in this as well as in all other phases of factory service work, the underlying purpose must be a genuine desire to further the advancement of workers by education and coöperative training and the service worker must ever have vision born of the words of Marcus Aurelius, "Men exist for the sake of one another; teach them, then, or bear with them."

THE THREE POSITION PLAN OF PROMOTION

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An adequate system of promotion is the solution not only of holding employees in an organization, but also of the employment problem.

There is much emphasis today upon the proper *selection* of employees, and many and elaborate systems have been undertaken for a scientific, or near-scientific, *placement*. These are not in any wise to be criticized, for the selection of the individuals comprising any organization is important, and any plan that will cause the employment manager to plan his duties carefully and to give each decision on the fortunes of others careful consideration is to be commended. It must be realized, however, that even more important is holding and helping these employees after they have been selected, and providing an adequate systematized plan of advancement for them. In the Three Position Plan of Promotion we have not only the true and proved answer to the problem of promotion, but also the means by which efficient placement becomes almost automatic, and a supply of desirable applicants for any vacant position is constantly available. No system of placement can hope to succeed unless such a supply of applicants is available.